

Education Mini Grant Guidelines

Background: The 47th Legislature provided to the conservation districts one half of one percent of the coal severance tax monies for any purposes that they are authorized to perform pursuant to MCA, Title 76, Chapter 15, Part 4. Since 1981, conservation districts have used these funds for conservation related projects.

The Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) provides fiscal management of the grant programs while the Resource Conservation Advisory Council (RCAC) review applications and provides recommendations for funding to DNRC Conservation Districts Bureau (CDB) Program Manager.

Applicant Eligibility

The Education Mini grant program was formulated to assist conservation districts work on conservation and natural resource education projects that are on a smaller scale allowing focus on a specific audience and/or topic. Activities for both youth and adults are eligible. Schools and other organizations may apply, but their application must be sponsored and approved by their local conservation district.

Grant Types and Limits:

Educational events and projects: \$500.00 The minimum application request must be \$100.00.

Examples of Eligible Projects:

- Community gardens and projects
- Conservation days
- Restoration projects
- Outdoor classrooms / Field trips
- Workshops

Can be on topics covering:

- Aquatic Micro- and Macro- flora and fauna
- Terrestrial Micro- and Macro- flora and fauna
- Riparian and Rangeland Ecology
- Soils
- Water
- Weeds
- Wildlife
- Other natural resource concerns

Grant Budget:

- Provide a detailed budget indicating how the grant funds will be used.
- May charge an administration fee for *sponsorship* only. This is based on the percentage of the total expenses and cannot exceed 10 percent.
- Include money or in-kind services from other sources (if applicable).

Grant Expenses:

Example of Eligible Expenses:

- Conservation district employee salary to organize and attend events
- Conservation district employee mileage to organize and attend events
- Advertisement fees to promote event
- Resource materials (educational kits/booklets, notebooks, field testing equipment, etc.)
- Scholarship stipends to appropriate camps
- Speaker fees
- Transportation costs for field trips

Example of Ineligible Expenses:

- Activities outside of the scope of work
- Costs incurred outside of the contract term to include grant application preparation
- Equipment (cameras, computers, microscopes, i-Pad, etc.) for schools
- Food and beverage items
- Trash bags, gloves, shovels, rakes, etc.
- Common items that can be easily borrowed or provided by schools

Guidelines for Schools or Organizations

Sponsorship: Schools and other organizations may apply for the Education Mini grant. It is recommended that these organizations work directly with their local conservation district as certain sections of the grant application is pertinent to their operations.

- To locate the conservation district that is nearest your program, view a map and directory at dnrc.mt.gov.
- The application must be sponsored and approved by the local conservation district at their Board of Supervisors meeting.

If funded: The grant contract will be written between the DNRC and the local conservation district, who would administer the funds. Costs may not be incurred outside of the contract term and signatures.

Expenses and Report: The Education Mini grant is a reimbursable program. All grant payments are paid upon receipt of proper documentation of approved expenses (invoices, receipts, and report) to the conservation district.

The conservation district will submit the expenses using the DNRC vendor invoice and final report. The final report should include pictures of the project. The vendor invoice, receipts, and final report must be received prior to any grant funds being released.

All payments will be made from the DNRC to the local conservation district. The school or organization will be reimbursed by the sponsoring conservation district.

Guidelines for Conservation Districts

Eligibility: To be eligible to receive an Education Mini grant, a conservation district must:

- Have levied the maximum county mills allowed for the current fiscal year
- Have or in the process of developing a special project as authorized in MCA, Title 76, Chapter 15, Part 4
- Have a need for additional funds above the maximum statutory authority
- Provide a copy of the conservation district's annual plan
- Submit an annual budget. Administrative grant applications may serve this purpose, however, for those conservation districts that do not apply for or receive an administrative grant must submit an annual budget prior to receiving grant funds.
- All previous grants received by the applicant must be current (i.e. all reports filed) before any new grant funds can be released.
- The chairperson of the conservation district must sign the application form. Mail a signed original copy and an electronic Word Document of the application must be submitted by the posted deadline.

Ineligible Applications:

- Submitted after the deadline due date
- Submitted without approval at a conservation district board meeting
- Submitted without the signature of the conservation district board Chairperson or designate
- Incomplete application

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